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ABSTRACT

These three papers deal with ways to incorporate social studies into the language arts curriculum. The first paper, "What Social Studies Teachers Need To Know about Language Arts," provides suggestions on the writing process and how that process can be used in the social studies. Paper 2, "Applying Communications Activities to Learning Processes in Senior High Social Studies," describes the Diagnostic Learning and Communication Processes Program with practical activities and specific instructional suggestions for social studies teachers based on these principles. Paper 3 focuses on "Teaching Social Studies by Teaching Writing." A variety of activity ideas are presented that focus on the five communication processes of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing. Three assignments incorporated into this paper include the learning log, the portfolio, and the project. (EH)

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Teaching Social Studies By Teaching Language Arts: Three Papers on Using Language Arts Skills in Social Studies Teaching

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

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Paper One: What Social Studies Teachers Need to Know About Language Arts

The Writing Process Approach to Formal Writing

For most students, writing is not an easy task. Many students, when they are asked to prepare written reports, essays, or other formal writing for a particular audience, as they are in most social studies classrooms, have a tough time spinning out clear, concise, well-organized, properly punctuated prose the first few times they set their pens to paper. In addition to all the regular problems that writing well brings, many students are discouraged because they expect that writing will come easily. Students who anticipate that writing will be easy are often frustrated -- because writing is usually not easy. Writing is, they discover, usually long and usually messy.

Some students sit, minute after minute, in front of an empty paper or computer screen. Nothing comes; or, when it does, it isn't quite good enough. The try; they try again; and, finally, they quit. These are the frustrated students that many social studies teachers see in their classrooms. Often they are the hardest to motivate -- not because they are lazy, but because they are discouraged.

How Can You Help Your Students Write More Easily?

Most people who write about writing call writing a process. What they are saying, simply, is that writing has a structure and a purpose. Some ways of going about writing are better than others. Writing is also a skill that takes practice. Teachers who help their students understand the structure and then practice that structure can help make writing more manageable. While it is true that some students can write without working from a plan, most students benefit from some sort of systematic organization.

The following outline suggests a helpful and a typical three-stage organizing structure that should help students work towards more solid writing. Although the actual practice of writing varies remarkably for each individual, the process often is generalized into the following three stages:

Stage One: Prewriting: In the prewriting stage, ideas percolate, are consolidated, and are clarified in the writer's mind. The writer's goal is to establish a purpose and an audience for the writing. Initial planning occurs. During this initial writing, the writer works to put ideas into words and words into some logical sequence. "Prewriting" happens naturally as one observes, discusses, thinks, writes spontaneously, thinks some more, writes some more, and so on. Prewriting also usually continues after drafting has begun.

Stage Two: Drafting: At the drafting stage, the actual "writing out" of ideas begins. Usually a first draft is "revisited" once, twice, or many times as the writer reorganizes, rewords, deletes, and adds ideas to craft succeeding drafts.

Stage Three: Editing: When the content is "set" and the writer is pleased with the shape, clarity, and order of the piece, details are attended to and the writing is polished. For example, spelling, punctuation, grammar, usage, tone, format, etc. are considered with care.

There are no hard-and-fast rules or specific steps that students should follow to complete the three stages listed above. Instead, the stages represent suggestions of activities that, when completed, will usually result in more polished work. But there is more to good writing than showing students that there is a writing or composing structure. Students must also work in ways that will help them see the structure "in action." The following section suggests a series of possible ideas for pulling the writing process and the writing product together. Nothing is more encouraging to a writer than completing a good, solid piece of work.

Ideas for Helping Students Improve Formal Writing in Social Studies

The following ideas are practical examples of activities that social studies teachers can use to help their students improve their formal writing.

1. Give students time in class to explore and shape their ideas for a formal report. Some important aids to this exploration are through talk, by list-

making, by using spontaneous writing, etc. Make some of these tasks a specific part of the process you have students do.

2. Encourage students to revise their work. Make revision a natural part of the students' work. Ask students to show you the first and second drafts. One the easiest way to view their drafts is to have students attach these drafts to the final report.

3. Give students time for revision in class. For example, declare an early due date for first drafts, then have students help each other by working with partners or in small groups. In these groups, their task is to read each other's writing and provide feedback. This process is called "conferencing" or "peer editing." For most students, the activity of peer editing will not be new; they will have been taught what to do by their language arts teacher. You should remember, when peer editing, to give students a set of specific criteria for making changes and a structure for giving feedback to each other.

4. Provide models of "good" student writing. These examples can be shown on the overhead projector. The purpose of these examples is positive, rather than negative. Examples help to show students exactly what you mean by comments like clear descriptions, well-organized paragraphs, concise summaries, etc.

5. Don't grade everything (the formal reports, paragraphs, etc.) that your students write. Depending on your class, it might be wise to ask students to submit all the pieces they finish; but, you can choose which ones you will grade. For example, if you collect a set of group reports you may want to be

selective and only grade one report from each group. You may also ask students to evaluate each other's writing. For example, small groups can assess a set of papers according to criteria you teach them. Finally, have students evaluate their own writing.

RAFTS Writing Assignments

One very helpful idea that adapts itself well to social studies is the RAFT assignment. The RAFTS formula (Role - Audience - Format - Topic - Strong Verb) is especially good for helping students create imaginative pieces of writing; and, through this imaginative writing students can come to "wrap their heads around" the concepts or content they are learning in your class. As you create these RAFT exercises for your students, you can help them adopt new perspectives on social studies issues, discover divergent applications for a social studies concept, or make sudden connections between themselves and their learning.

To help your students begin a RAFT exercise, you should decide the specific topic that will be the focus of the writing. Then, make a list of possible "roles" the students could assume in discussing the particular topic they will be working on and another list of potential "audiences" that their remarks might be directed to.

Teachers can help the students by choosing a role and audience for the exercise; or, students can choose their own roles. The next choice is a writing format for the students to use. To create the RAFTS assignment, you should

write a sentence tying together the role, audience, format, and topic together with a "strong verb" identifying the main purpose of the writing.

A typical structure for a RAFT assignment might look like: As a (ROLE), write a (FORMAT) to (AUDIENCE) , (STRONG VERB) ing about (TOPIC) .

Filling in the specific blanks could look like this:

(a) You are a *witness to the violence* (ROLE) of the French Revolution. Write a *letter* (FORMAT) to *your brother* (AUDIENCE) back in Canada *outlining* (STRONG VERB) *some of the atrocities that you have witnessed* (TOPIC).

(b) You are *a reporter* (ROLE) who has traveled with Gengis Khan. In your small group, recreate a *10-minute segment* (FORMAT) of the *Opra Winfrey Show* (AUDIENCE) that *highlights* (STRONG VERB) some of the *news stories you have written* for your paper (TOPIC).

As a teacher, you can use RAFTS assignments when you want to encourage students to make new mental connections or to explore elements and applications of a concept they may not have thought of through "regular" question-answer activities. RAFTS can also be used to make up quickie five- or ten-minute in-class writing exercises or to develop essay assignment topics. In addition, students can use the RAFTS formula to make up their own writing assignments. A pleasant side-effect of asking students to complete

RAFTS assignments is the usually lively and interesting products they come up with.

Reading Strategies for Understanding Social Studies Materials

Writing is not the only language arts skill your students need to master to become more proficient in your social studies class. Most social studies teachers tend to take it for granted that their students can read; however, reading is a skill that most students need to do more proficiently. Most social studies classrooms are made up of students with a wide range of reading skills. Some students are excellent readers; but, others will not have many reading strategies to help them learn new social studies vocabulary or concepts from the explanations in their textbooks.

Because social studies classes usually are focused around a textbook, helping students make sense with the textbooks they use can be of real benefit. Some of the following reading strategies may help your students better understand what they read:

Strategy One: Forming Headlines: Divide text material into chunks and form a headline that summarizes the information in each chunk.

Strategy Two: Creating Outlines: Condense the key ideas in the text into a one-page outline, writing an appropriate heading for each outline.

Strategy Three: Writing Questions: Skim the material, then write a list of questions about the material that you think highlight important parts.

Change your questions with another student. Read the text again to find the answers to the questions you have been given.

Strategy Four: Predicting: Skim titles, subheadings, pictures, graphics, opening and closing paragraphs, then write a list of predictions about what the content says. Before and during reading, stop periodically to list your predictions and hypotheses about the information being presented. Compare these predictions and hypotheses with others. When you have completed the text reading, compare your predictions and hypotheses to the information revealed in the text. How able were you to predict what was going to be written? Before reading, try writing everything spontaneously you know about the topic being presented and predict what new information you will learn.

Strategy Five: Responding to Text: After reading, write spontaneously a personal response to the text; or, write a series of personal questions you have about the reading.

Strategy Six: Choosing Key Lines: Choose the most important lines. Write these lines down in your note book. In a small group, justify your choices and compare them to the choices of other students.

Strategy Seven (PQ4R): Quickly *preview* or skim the material in the text. Then list *questions* that occur based on this skimming. After your have finished this activity, *read, reflect, recite* by answering your questions in writing, Finally, *review* what you have written.

Speaking/Listening

A third set of language arts skills, after writing and reading, includes speaking and listening. Through talk, just as through writing or reading, students process what they learn. As students talk they sort out and clarify their learning, test their hypotheses, become aware of associations between concepts and ideas, make connections between the new ideas and their past experiences and knowledge, and extend their understandings.

Because talk helps students piece together their ideas for writing, you should provide many opportunities for small group discussion. Teacher-led discussion on occasion is valuable, but excessive teacher talk can severely limit the number of students who get a chance to verbally "chew through" new concepts. Whole-group discussion can be helpful; however, whole group work is not as "safe" a place as the small group when students need to verbally work through half-formed ideas and ask questions.

Many techniques exist for creating and using collaborative small-group discussions. A brief summary of ideas for using small group discussion follows:

Idea One: Role Play: In a discussion, students can assume the point of view of a different person. For example, in a small group panel activity discussing an issue, each student might speak from the perspective of a different stakeholder.

Idea Two: Debate: Debate can be structured in formal teams of two pairs, or informally in small groups. In a typical debate, students debate an issue posed as a resolution (i.e., Be it resolved that fossil fuel consumption should be limited by household.) Debate helps students learn to use persuasive logic and researched support to present their opinions.

Idea Three: Jig Saw Groups: The premise for jig saw groups is that each small "home" group is given a different text to read and make sense of. During their work, they should create a product that they can write down and share with another group (i.e., listing key points and author's overall position). Then, one person from each "home" group is sent to join a new "composite" group; another person from each group is sent to make up the second "composite" group; and so on. In the "composite" groups, members in turn teach their new group the article they studied in their home group.

Idea Four: Fishbowl: In a fishbowl format, one small group is the center of a discussion in the center of class. The remainder of the class observes and assesses this discussion. The teachers' task is to stop periodically for class reflection and to analyze what's happening. During these stops, insights are revealed and material is reviewed. Another strategy that would keep the rest of the class on their toes would be to, during a stop, substitute in a student from the observing group.

Idea Five: Seminar: In a seminar, one student "teaches" the class using a speech, slide-tape, display, dramatization, model, or other presentation of concepts learned. A variety of topics and formats can be utilized during such seminars.

Viewing

Language skills are not limited to reading and writing. As students attempt to make sense of the world around them and to communicate with each other more powerfully, they need to become better viewers. Viewing is considered a communication activity because humans must view to both read and to comprehend the non-verbal messages crucial to oral exchange they have with others.

The explosion of media now being used in social studies classrooms and the predominance of controversial social issues in the world that students must address, critical viewing is a necessary and an important skill. If students cannot be critical of the messages they constantly see, they will not be able to develop the intellectual resources they need to make sense of the world of persuasion that attempts to influence their choices.

Teachers can help students learn how to view more critically by asking them to analyze how a social issue or concept is presented on film or television. As they critically view, the student's task is to practice separating facts from opinions, examine the method of presentation, study the type of persuasive discourse used, and come to understand the reasons for the selection of some information and the exclusion of other information, assessing how the concept of "entertainment" is used in the media to make the social world "palatable" for the lay audience.

The act of viewing includes coming to see how things are put together. For example, teachers can work to help their students understand the

different forms that writing can take. Students can examine various aspects of visual presentations: the effects of sound, music, lighting, movement, special effects, camera angle, editing, color, angle, composition, line, and symbols to present phenomena in the natural world or make a statement about an important social issue.

Or, students might examine the concept of form and design in newspaper presentations. How is the eye directed to certain stories? What prominence are social studies ideas given in overall context? How are stories about important social events juxtaposed with less "weighty" news stories or with ads? What viewpoint is expressed editorially? And, with what frequency does the newspaper attack important social issue editorials? How are headings, graphics, and other devices for simplifying the message used?

In all viewing activities, it's important that you, as a teacher, help students stand back critically from the viewed messages you bring into the classroom. You can help mediate your students' responses through discussion and guided reflection, prompting your students to really *see* from different perspectives. You can also help your students by spending time before each viewed presentation to provide the context of what is being viewed, your purposes for viewing it, and helping students to focus on the elements that you want them to see. After viewing, students should be given time to write about their responses and observations, and to discuss and compare their responses and analyses with others.

Another aspect of viewing activities is actually creative construction. In other words, you could have your students develop their own visual

presentation of a concept, process, event, or opinion on an issue. Possible forms for such a presentation include storyboards (i.e. a "blueprint" for a film that includes a series of drawings depicting the sequence of camera shots, with corresponding dialogue written underneath), comic strips, posters, advertisements, collages, photo-essays, computer graphics, displays, slide-tape presentations, video productions, board games, or bulletin boards.

Conclusion

Social studies and language arts are always intertwined because social studies' content can not exist without language. In fact, most scholars state clearly that there can be no knowledge or understanding without language and communication. Social studies, especially, depends on communication.

As a teacher, you can help your students become better social studies students by becoming a better language arts teacher. Helping your students practice the language arts skills of writing, reading, speaking, and viewing not only helps students do better in school, but the process of becoming better communicators of language helps students become more powerful and active citizens -- which is the fundamental goal of social studies education.

Paper Two: Applying Communication Activities to Learning Processes in Senior High Social Studies

The ideas presented here are intended to help social studies teachers use communication activities to help improve their social studies teaching. The ideas that follow have been based on a comprehensive theory called the "Diagnostic Learning and Communication Processes Program" (DLCP). In this article, we will give the readers a very brief summary of the main principles of the DLCP program. Then we will suggest practical activities and highlight specific instructional suggestions for social studies teachers based on these principles.

Principle One: Exploring

When beginning to learn a new concept, whether that concept is in social studies or any other subject area, students ***explore*** the material by first recognizing events and experiences from their own relevant past that will help them understand this new concept. As they explore, students must risk failure and work to overcome learning difficulties as they struggle to make connections between the new information and their previous knowledge, try to apply the new information even before fully understanding it, and ask the questions that will direct their search.

To help students explore more successfully in social studies, the following communication activities might prove helpful to both teachers and students:

(1) When introducing a new concept, have students list everything they know about that concept as quickly as they can. Ask students to share their ideas and consolidate their lists in groups. Often students are surprised at the amount of knowledge they've already accumulated.

(2) Cluster a new concept or word to uncover the students' own associations and background knowledge.

(3) Brainstorm, alone on paper or in groups, all the questions students have about a new concept. (Quantity, not quality, is the key in brainstorming. Judgment of ideas must be suspended while students try to shake out ideas. In brainstorming, try having competitions for "the most ideas," and celebrate the most unique offerings).

(4) Have students write spontaneous predictions for events. These include possible outcomes for choices, possible human reactions, the behavior of subjects, and information that they can base on previous knowledge.

(5) Ask students to write spontaneously personal response to the teacher after a lesson or a reading.

(6) Have students brainstorm possible applications for a new concept in their daily lives and the world around them. Or, have students brainstorm possible new applications for a concept. Or, students can brainstorm examples from their personal experience that will help them better understand their new social studies learning. For example:

•*How many things can you think of in your personal experience where technological changes occur? (After asking this question, have students choose one technological change and explain in writing exactly what they think the impact of the change will be).*

•*In groups, list three different human problems you encounter in daily life. Figure out some of the possible causes of these human problems and discuss whether or not there are any solutions to these problems, relating what you know already about human behavior, the impact of stress and pressure, and understanding what you have learned from both your own experiences and the experiences of others you have read or heard about. Then find an interesting way to present your findings to the class.*

To evaluate how well students are ***exploring,*** teachers can walk around the class listening to their groups during discussion or reading their spontaneous writing. The key indicators (shown here in boldface) are students' willingness to **risk failure, difficulty, or dissonance;** the ease with which they **make connections and act on partial information;** and their ability to **ask questions to direct search for new information.** Teachers should notice that the emphasis is not on the PRODUCT they produce, whether it be a piece

of writing or a group presentation, but the learning skills they demonstrate in the PROCESS of exploring.

Principle Two: Narrating

Story, or narration, is the most primal way of organizing and personalizing experience. When teachers allow students the opportunity to ***narrate*** as they are learning new concepts and skills, they can help their students connect personal experience and other knowledge to new knowledge in a way they will remember. Narrative connects cognition with affect, which is why it's highly motivational; this is also the reason why most good professional speakers rely on stories and anecdotes to get across their message.

Teachers should try to use the following communication activities to incorporate narrative. These narratives might focus on using a historical incident, a social studies concept or vocabulary term, a memorable person, or any other piece of content being learned. The following examples suggest how narrative can be used:

(1) Write a mystery story where what is being studied is part of the key to the solution.

(2) Make up a love story in which a person being studied in the social studies class is a central character in the story.

(3) Make up a "fractured fairy tale," adapting an old tale using social studies' information they have learned.

(4) Tell a myth, explaining how the content you are studying came to exist. This can be an introduction to a social studies unit.

(5) Read a science fiction story and trace how this story has been extended or expanded from historical events of ideas.

(6) Tell a science fiction or fantasy story showing a world where the content you are studying is used in ways thought impossible today. Imagine how the suggested changes might encourage or hinder social studies concepts like progress, equality, freedom, etc.

(7) Make up a story about someone whose life might have been strongly affected by the content you are studying in social studies.

(8) Choose a particular historical event or person and create a story of how this event or person might have influenced present day life. Tell the story as if you were telling it to a six-year-old.

(9) Tell the story in a "rap" song for a twelve-year-old that retells the content you are studying.

(10) Tell a part of your own story that no human has yet discovered and that you believe might have an important impact on the world.

(11) Tell the story of what happened during a real event, but change the ending, if you like (narrating the discovery process).

(12) Relate in writing, or in pairs or small groups, an anecdote from personal experience that illustrates the social studies content, concepts, or skills you are learning.

(13) Teacher: Read a story to students that gives them information that leads to the learning a new social studies concept.

(14) Teacher: Introduce a unit with a story based on the social studies concept you are presenting (i.e., a mystery story based on the use of a certain event or decision.)

Teachers can evaluate their students' use of the learning process of narrating. As they do so, teachers can check DLCP checklists to help them measure the extent to which the students connect their personal experience and other knowledge to new knowledge with anecdotes; how well they use time and space to organize their narrations; and the extent to which they enjoy sharing their own and other's narrations.

Imagining

Imagination is the realm of creating new hypotheses, inventing new applications, and discovering new connections between ideas and concepts. Social studies students will only transcend the "what is" of the here-and-now when teachers prompt them to ***imagine*** "what might be." Concrete images are also more easily remembered than abstractions. The more teachers

encourage students to transform new social studies concepts and skills in imaginative ways, the more successful and long-term their learning will be.

The following suggestions are offered as examples that can help encourage students to use imagination to expand their learning about social studies concepts, people, events, ideas, or other content being taught:

(1) Compare what you are studying in social studies to something you are familiar with, and explain the comparison (this is called "writing similes").

For example: A constitution is like a _____ *because* _____.

Possible Answers: A constitution is like a hockey game because it needs rules to proceed, but mostly tries to sort out the wild and furious action that needs an outside person to interpret whether these rules are broken or not.

A constitution is like a chicken: a totally autonomous living unit with no brains)

(2) Imagine three jobs that the person you are studying might be good at but would never have thought to do.

(3) If this social studies ideas were an animal, what animal would it be? (and why?)

(4) What person from the event would you like to meet? Which person would you be most afraid to talk to? Why or why not?

(5) Picture the historical event you are studying in your mind as if you are seeing it for the first time: what do you notice first?

(6) Imagine that you are observing the outcome of a meeting between two historical characters. Describe in detail what you see.

(7) For an abstract concept, vocabulary term, or set of relationships, imagine: what color it is, what shape, what place it is, what political system could it be thought as part of (what depends on it? what does it depend on? what does it eat? what eats it?)

(8) Examine a "new improved version" of an actual product recently released by a company. Imagining yourself as the competitor and design and test an even more improved version.

(9) Imagine that you are a particular event (the signing of a peace treaty, a successful protest against the government, the building or an important building or structure, the use of a neutron in a nuclear weapon, etc.). Tell your story. Use words or pictures or both. Create a play, story, collage, storyboard, comic strip, photo-essay, etc.

(10) Use RAFTS to find different perspectives for viewing the thing: (The RAFTS formula (Role - Audience - Format - Topic - Strong Verb) *(a) As an elected official to a political convention, write a letter to your constituents relating how the list of concerns they had presented you have been addressed . (b) As a tree, write a complaint to the Canfor pulp and paper*

mill about your treatment in the paper process. (c) As a concerned environmentalist, speak to an assembly of students, warning about the hazardous effects that their actions have on human health and the future of the world.

(11) Make up a case study based on a problem that the content you are studying. (Teachers may need to remind students that a case study describes a specific real-life issue by giving enough background and detail for problem-solvers to work with and by including brief portraits of the key players involved and their points of view.) Teachers may want to select the most interesting case studies produced and assign them to small groups of students to solve or have various small groups each develop a solution independently to the same case study, then compare and debate their solutions.

When evaluating students' ability to imagine, teachers can utilize DLCP instruments to help students focus on their ability to use metaphor (comparisons), to create and transform mental images, and to imagine themselves in different times and places.

Empathizing

When students shift perspective from their own point of view to examine people and events from other perspectives, they are often jolted into new understandings. Communication activities fostering this ***empathy*** with alternate points of view can help students achieve higher levels of awareness towards a "big picture vision" that will anchor their social studies learning into a larger pattern of meaning.

Following are some suggestions for situations to help students empathize with differing perspectives about a social studies event, person, idea, or other content being taught. These situations can be topics for spontaneous writing or other forms of writing such as a letter, oral presentation, or a role play:

(1) Imagine you have been studying this event for a long time. Write your journal entry explaining the latest thing you have learned about it or explain how you see this event after a lifetime spent studying it.

(2) Create a mock public hearing in the classroom for an issue currently being debated by government. (The teacher can identify various stakeholders ahead of time that students must research. Through role play, the students then present their position before the appointed committee.)

(3) Imagine a time in the 19th century: you have just discovered that an important event is going to happen and are trying to convince the government to fund further research that would help modify the impact of that event.

(4) Pretend you are a skeptical social scientist in the 19th century who is attempting to disprove a social theory that a colleague is supporting.

(5) Imagine it is sometime in the 22nd century. You, as a social scientist, have just discovered that some belief or understanding we have now about what you are studying is fundamentally wrong. Tell about your findings.

(6) Take a specific role in a current issue affecting health, technology, or the environment. For example:

As the mayor of Edmonton, write a reply to a citizen complaint about the foul taste of spring water, explaining the reasons for the taste.

DLCP instruments can help teachers evaluate students' ability to empathize, measure the extent to which they suspend judgment till full understanding is reached, select language to take audience into account, take on another's role, or shift attention away from oneself while communicating.

Abstracting

A major part of social studies learning is making and evaluating abstract generalizations, then applying these generalizations to make sense of new information or make predictions about new situations. Through the use of communication activities, students can refine their ability to ***abstract*** in a clear and logical way. Following are some examples:

(1) Write summaries (in own words) of a new idea you have learned. Compare and discuss this new idea, then revise what you have learned in your own words.

(2) Write predictions about an event that is about to happen, generalizing your predictions using information already learned.

(3) Create a graphic model or chart that outlines something you have just learned.

(4) Create a cartoon to humorously personify an event or person being studied. (Teachers might use professional examples like Gary Larson's *Far Side* as models.)

(5) Analyze the influence of media on people's understanding of social studies issues. Or, make generalizations about the prominence of certain social studies issues in the media at the current time.

(6) Analyze a governmental position on a particular issue that affects health, technology, or the environment. (Teachers should take into account factors like fiscal restraint, rights of various stakeholders, political considerations.) Or, debate the issue of a doctor's or scientist's view opposed to the bureaucratic stance.

(7) Analyze and compare newspaper editorials about certain social studies issues, examining and evaluating authors' views, the accuracy of information presented, the simplification of information for lay audience, etc. (You may find essays or columns in the newspaper that can be used and will be helpful.)

(8) Analyze a case study of a societal issue using social studies concepts you have learned. (Material for case studies may be borrowed from current events, such as decisions being debated at government levels about, for example, the effects of logging or the building mill of a dam. Have students

research the case in groups, obtaining the necessary information from the media, government reports, interviews, etc., then propose their group's recommended decision.)

(9) Create a storyboard for a film to show a process or explain a social studies concept for a particular audience.

(10) Dramatize a social studies concept or a political process, and write the concept in a way that can be presented to elementary or junior high students.

(11) Analyze the treatment of a social issue in a feature film. As you analyze this issue, note the accuracy of the viewpoint presented. Or, analyze and evaluate an extrapolation of some piece of current societal knowledge to predict conditions and developments in a science fiction or futuristic film.

(12) Analyze the image of political leaders in the media (or, in advertisements, on television, etc.)

(13) Research and analyze how governments are portrayed in feature films.

(14) Analyze advertisements that use "scientific information" or important people to support their claims. Evaluate the accuracy of the information presented, noting any important omissions and use of "weasel words." Or, analyze advertisements making claims about a particular product, then design experiments to test whether these claims are true.

(15) Debate the scientific use of animals for product testing.

(16) Evaluate and compare "environmentally friendly" products. Or, analyze advertisements for such products.

To evaluate students' ability to abstract, teachers might use DLCP concepts to help them measure the extent to which students are able use symbol to represent abstractions, make plausible predictions based on abstractions, evaluate soundness of own generalizations, or provide support for generalizations.

Monitoring

If students don't learn how to ***monitor*** their own social studies learning, they will likely not improve their learning skills. Teachers can use writing and discussion activities to help students affirm their understandings and locate their knowledge "gaps." Students can be encouraged to develop their own learning goals and make these explicit through writing. Students need to be helped to become aware of their problem-solving process by tracking and evaluating, in writing, the thinking process they use. Some other ways to involve students in monitoring their own learning include:

(1) Make use of learning logs which students write in at each class end. Periodically have students review, compare, and evaluate these logs.

(2) Have students assess the learning they demonstrate on their own tests, then have students write specific learning goals for themselves. Help students design learning strategies to achieve their goals.

(3) Have pairs or groups of students develop a genuine research question (something they really want to find the answers to) that extends to a social studies unit or concept learned. After this choice has been made, then plan, conduct, and evaluate a project to answer the question. The research method might involve designing experiments, interviewing people, reviewing periodicals, or using other resources.

(4) Use spontaneous writing to help students track and compare the problem-solving process they use with the processes others use.

(5) After small group work, have students evaluate their individual and group progress towards mastery of one or two particular group skills that you have asked them to concentrate on. The following list of group skills may be used: asking questions, asking for clarification, checking for others' understanding, elaborating on each others' ideas, following directions, getting the group back to work, keeping track of time, listening actively, sharing information and ideas, staying on task, summarizing for understanding/paraphrasing.

(6) Record the process of solving a complex social issue by using color photos or slides, then arranging and presenting these as a photo-essay or documentary.

The ability of students to monitor can be evaluated by using DLCP concepts to measure the extent to which students set their own learning goals or purposes, plan learning strategies, persevere, or check their own mistakes.

Writing Formats

There are many different writing formats. The list that follows represents only a starting point to help students and teachers get their minds working. All these forms can be adapted for use in a social studies class: adventure tale, advertisement, article, autobiography, biblical passage, billboard, biography, book review, brochure, case study, children's book, comic, cross word puzzle, editorial, epitaph, essay, fairy tale, greeting card, headlines, instructions, invitations, joke, journal or diary, letter, list, logbook, magazine, manual, menu, message, multiple-choice questions, myth, newspaper, pamphlet, photo-essay, poem, puns, quotations, rap (rhythmic chant popular in rock music), recipe, report, request, resume, review, riddle, schedule. script, slogan, song, story, story-board, summary, test, tongue twister, travelogue, want ads, worksheet.

Conclusion

The goal of the paper has been to help teachers by suggesting ways that they can incorporate the use of writing assignments in the senior high social studies program. Teachers can both help their students become better able to learn language and social studies concepts at the same time. But, attention must be paid to how language arts activities can be incorporated into social studies.

Students will not simply absorb new concepts by listening to someone explain them. Instead, one of the best ways for students to improve social studies is for them to improve their language. To do this, students must internalize social studies concepts and skills by learning to use their own communication processes -- (1) reading, (2) writing, (3) speaking, (4) listening, and (5) viewing. Hopefully, this paper has presented a variety of activity ideas that will help teachers focus on using these five communication processes.

Paper Three: Teaching Social Studies By Teaching Writing

Social studies teachers know that students do not simply absorb new concepts by listening to someone explain them. If they are to learn more than just the answers to an objective exam that will be quickly forgotten, students must internalize social studies concepts and skills using their own communication processes. These communication processes include their (1) reading, (2) writing, (3) speaking, (4) listening, and (5) viewing.

The purpose of this paper is to present a variety of activity ideas that focus on using these five communication processes and to help teachers incorporate three important types of assignments into a senior high social studies program. The three assignments are:

1. The Learning Log
2. The Portfolio
3. The Project

The communication activities that students learn using these three assignments can help students make social studies concepts and skills their "own" by encouraging students to relate these concepts and skills to their own lives, exploring a wide variety of applications and connections to other knowledge and experience, and consolidating the learning in ways they will remember. Using these communication activities can also save teachers time. The use of these communication activities helps teachers help themselves

and their students quickly pinpoint their learning difficulties and find strategies to overcome them.

Focusing on communication activities in teaching will also help teachers become more effective in their attempts to develop the skills that students traditionally use in upper level social studies classes -- skills like critical reading and fluent writing, as well as the skills of small and large group discussion and the skills of class presentation. Although high school social studies teachers have not traditionally thought of themselves as "English" teachers, most high school social studies teachers have come to rely on the same communication skills in their classes that English teachers teach in theirs. A potential secondary impact of teaching reading and writing is the possibility that students' writing might even improve. Imagine being a social studies teachers who, instead of struggling with half-thought out ideas written poorly in sentence fragments, is handed a stack of research reports that are actually enjoyable reading, or conducting a lesson based on a text chapter that everyone has actually understood on their own. Such success might even add further joy to teaching.

Writing to Learn

Writing to learn is a concept that stems from the idea that writing is more than putting words down on paper in an orderly, neat, and understandable fashion. Writing is learning. As students write, they process new ideas, learning to "chew" them through and to make meaning for themselves. Writing to learn requires that students need time and space to

link the new concepts teachers are presenting to their own past experiences and to things they already understand.

As students begin to think their way through a new concept, they are often swimming in a whirlpool of mental associations, bits of information, half-formed questions, and a variety of feelings. From this "swirling mess" they try to make sense of the new learning and place it somewhere in their current picture of reality and the background knowledge they already have stored somewhere. When teachers pause in their teaching and give students time to reflect and write about all the things running through their heads, students can internalize the new learning and connect it to "stuff" they already know. These connections are the real organizing structures that allow students to link, to associate, to make sense of, to place in a system, and to learn.

The kind of reflection that helps students link concepts and understandings happens in quick periods of writing produced not for grading but for students' personal use as they sort through their thoughts on paper. Such writing is not for an audience; so, logic, polish, and surface considerations like spelling are mostly irrelevant. The emphasis on writing to learn is writing as a means to an end. The end is the formation of a new idea in the head of the student. When students are writing to learn, it should be made clear that the written product is not an end in itself. It is not created to be handed in and graded.

Writing as An Effective Means of Learning

Five factors help make writing an effective means of learning:

(1) *Writing is permanent.*. It captures fleeting thoughts and helps students hold onto an idea long enough to work it out before it vanishes. Something happens when a person writes something down that helps them remember it better. For example, people remember ideas they have reworked in new varying ways through writing, such as translating the learning to other situations and mediums.

(2) *Writing is explicit.* . When a student is asked to clarify and focus, what is sometimes a tangle of thoughts soon becomes a firm idea as it is put into words. When students feel mentally blocked in their problem-solving, writing is a way to get unstuck. As people write, for example, they often discover and crystallize shapeless ideas stored away that have been forgotten about. If teachers are attentive to the writing process, they can almost watch the connections their students are making unfold in front of them.

(3) *Writing is active.* When students write, they are actively representing ideas in symbols for themselves rather than just passively listening to the words of others. Students usually remember best when they have constructed and written meanings for themselves. For this reason, most good teachers do not waste time asking students to simply copy notes. Instead of copying someone else's ideas, students must draw on relevant knowledge, review and consolidate the meaning, extend the meaning into other

applications, then later reformulate and review the concept in light of new concepts presented. It is not enough for the teacher to review and consolidate the learning for the students; they've got to do it for themselves.

(4) *Writing requires organization.* To put ideas into language, writers must relate the parts of the idea in some meaningful way. Thought is multi-dimensional, reflecting endless configurations that sometimes leave the learner hopelessly mired. Writing, by contrast, is more linear. Words string into sentences, winding a trail that lends logical order to the spinning wheels of thought.

(5) *Writing connects to the self.* For many people, learning means constantly seeking connection between the self and the rest of the world. People remember the things that are important to them; that is, they believe it is important to recall most things that are tied into their experience. These ties are often emotional memories, images, or stories.

Students are no different. Their own experience is more real to them than abstractions. Social studies teachers know that storytelling, imagination, and feelings were the "human" ways of knowing even before recorded history. Because students have relied on these ways of knowing intuitively since birth, they are quite capable of using them in a social studies class. When students write spontaneously about memories sparked by new learnings in social studies, or generate poems connecting concrete associations and feelings with abstract social studies concepts and issues, or invent stories applying social studies concepts or skills, or write dialogues arguing two sides of a societal issue, the learning becomes memorable.

Activities that Help Students Learn

The following activities are offered as practical ways to help students utilize communication activities as a way to learn social studies skills and concepts.

Activity One: Spontaneous writing

Spontaneous writing means simply to write spontaneously and nonstop for a short period of time. A typical period of time is five to ten minutes. What flows out onto the page is a kind of "mental dump." In this type of writing, the writer suspends any critical judgment of the writing produced. Spontaneous writing is not the time to worry about sentence structure, word choice, or tone.

In some classes spontaneous writing becomes part of a *journal* or a *learning log* kept over a period of time. In other classes, spontaneous writing is done at the teacher's directive on a clean page amongst other social studies notes. The product of spontaneous writing is not what's important. More often than not, spontaneous writing resembles "verbal soup." The thinking process that occurs (constructing, connecting, clarifying, consolidating meaning) when students write out their ideas at crucial learning times is the goal of spontaneous writing.

Students can write spontaneously in response to a teacher's specific question, or to reflect on what they've just learned, or to recall the process

they used to solve a problem, or to generate questions, or to explore personal associations, or to brainstorm applications, or to sort out their opinion on an issue, or to complete any number of other writing-to-learn purposes in social studies.

Some students will have trouble when they are first asked to use spontaneous writing in class. Somewhere in their growth as writers they've learned to fear and resist writing. Writing, for them, has become the agonized labor of trying to squeeze out an orderly succession of words that must be grammatically correct, spelled right, and punctuated properly. Writing, when thought of like this, is hard work.

Past writing "failures" have taught students to distrust their own writing. In short, they have become paralyzed. Other students like to compartmentalize their learning. Like some social studies teachers, they are confused and uncomfortable when someone tries to make links between subject areas ("this is social studies class so why are we doing language arts?")

These students, like many adults who fear and resist new things, have to be nudged along until they discover the value of what they're doing. Students, like everyone else, need to believe that they are getting good value for their effort. If students are shown models of student spontaneous writing, perhaps on the overhead projector, and come to work with these models successfully, they will soon learn that their work will pay big rewards. Students, if they are to become mature scholars, need to be shown unique insights, asked tough questions, and encouraged by teachers who make

seemingly "radical" connections uncovered through their spontaneous writing.

Teachers need to be explicit. Students need to be shown, with examples, how these writing exercises can actually help them learn and remember social studies concepts and skills. Teachers also need to be patient, remain positive, and accepting of students' first attempts.

Activity Two: Summarizing a Concept

After "teaching" a concept (whether through lecture, demonstration, text reading, or other method), teachers need to stop the class and ask students to write about what they have learned. Teachers may begin the activity by saying something like:

"Okay everybody, without saying a word to your neighbor, without asking a single question, without stopping to think, start writing an explanation of concept X as you understand it. Use your own words. Make it so clear that someone in this class could read it and understand it. Don't worry about spelling or sentence structure or repetition. Worry only about writing as clear an explanation as you can."

Teachers can then walk around the room while students write. At a glance it is obvious who understands the concept and who doesn't. More important, students will quickly come to realize just how comfortable they are with the new learning.

There are a number of variations to this activity. For example, teachers might have students exchange their "explanation" with a partner, read each other's, then respond to it orally or in writing. Some questions might include: did it work? was it clear? was it accurate? Teachers can also ask students to share their written summaries with the whole class. Teachers who give lots of positive encouragement and honest praise will encourage future spontaneous writing attempts.

Teachers might also ask the students to pretend they are writing an explanation for a younger sibling, a junior high student, or some other audience. It is possible to ask students to develop, in writing, an example showing the concept in action. Students would then describe the concept through the example.

Activity Three: Using Learning Logs

Some social studies teachers have students write a brief, spontaneous writing summary during the last five minutes of each class. They then ask students to keep these summaries separately in their notebooks as "learning logs." Exercises like these help students recall and consolidate the learning of the day.

To help get them started with their learning logs, teachers can give students focus questions such as: (1) What do you know now that you didn't know when you walked in today? (2) How can this new knowledge/skill help you in your own life? (3) What further question(s) do you still have at this point?

Activity Four: Using Personal Responses

After a lesson or a series of lessons that teach a particular social studies concept or skill, teachers can ask students to spontaneously write a one-page letter to them about what they are learning. If teachers like, they can provide prompts for students who don't know what to write about. Teachers can write these prompts on a chart and post it somewhere in the room for students to glance at when writing a lesson response. Possible prompts include:

- What part of our content are you finding easiest to learn?

- What content did you already know or had figured out in your own life?

- What is still confusing for you?

- What one thing did you find out that you didn't know before that is really interesting?

- How do you feel right now about what we're doing?

- What part of the content we are studying do you find is meaningful in your life somehow? How does it relate?

- Does any part of what we are studying relate to what you're learning now in another subject area? What's the connection?

• What questions have occurred to you (general or specific, related to the material or not) that we haven't addressed?

Personal responses also work really well when the class is discussing a controversial social issue. If teachers are using personal responses to teach students, they might ask students to stop everything (especially at points where the discussion is particularly heated and certain students who need longer thinking time before offering their opinion are not participating) and have students write spontaneously what they are thinking.

In setting these personal responses up, teachers can ask students to address the points they agree/disagree with and to give examples that support or contradict the points that have been made by others. Or, teachers can ask their students suddenly write about the issue from a totally different perspective. For example, in the midst of a discussion on deforestation of Vancouver Island, students can be asked to assume the role of a representative from MacMillan-Bloedel who has been listening to the class remarks so far. From this perspective, the students can then write the thoughts and feelings of that person about the issue in a spontaneous fashion.

Teachers should remember to encourage personal response in open-ended writing. Teachers need to make sure that the activities they use do not degenerate into lists of questions that students must answer. Rather than answering teacher questions, an activity that students know all too well, teachers who use personal responses are after the students' honest reactions to what's going on in their social studies learning. The activity of spontaneous writing is as much a chance for students to discover their own

questions and link these questions with their past experiences and knowledge as it is for the teacher to get an immediate sense of how well the students are processing the information being presenting and why some students are having difficulty.

Activity Five: Using Two-Column Notes

When using two-column notes, students should divide their note pages in two. On the left side they should keep those informational notes that they believe are important. These are the notes they have listened to or read throughout the lectures or text readings. (They probably already keep running notes now in their classes.) In the right column students should write personal responses to the new material they have noted. These personal responses can include questions, fleeting associations with personal experience and other knowledge, applications, frustrations, etc. During a class lecture teachers might want to stop to allow students a few minutes to consider the new learning and write their considerations in the right column.

Activity Six: Using Responses in Dialogue

Using "responses in dialogue" is a simple activity. In this activity, students should write personal responses to a lecture or text reading. Their responses should be addressed to a specific partner, just like they were writing a "letter." They should then exchange this "letter" with their partner, who writes a response back to them. These responses allow the students to learn from their own writing as well as from each other.

Activity Seven: Problem-Solving in Writing

As students problem solve during their writing, they work to describe the process they went through in solving a specific problem immediately after they finish the problem -- even if they get stuck and can't solve the problem. The point here is to help students become aware of the way they found their way through the problem, then help them compare this way to how others solved the problem so that they can re-assess the efficiency of their own problem-solving process.

The central question in a response dialogue is: How can I improve my approach to a similar problem next time? Students can then share their solution process with a partner or with a small group. Or, they might lead the class through a method they have learned that helps them solve the problem. Then the students can go back to their writing-about-their-solution-process, evaluate it, and write again -- this time about alternate approaches to the same problem, elements they hadn't considered, or thoughts about what they might do differently next time.

Activity Eight: Clustering (also called mind mapping, networking, and webbing)

When starting a unit, students could be given a key word or concept to "cluster." Cluster means jotting down any ideas or experiences they associate with that word. Students should write this word or phrase in the center of their page with a circle around it; they should then quickly jot down key

words or phrases to represent things they associate with that root word. These associations form "branches," with one association leading to another until the train of thought is exhausted.

Once this first cluster is completed (although it may always be added to during the process), the writer begins again at the root word and starts a new branch of idea clusters. The clustering continues until an idea forms clearly enough for the student to want to start writing about it. At the point where the student says "enough," there is a shift. The student quits making "idea branches" and actually starts to write about an idea which has encouraged the motivation to write. This shift is the main purpose of the exercise.

Clustering helps students consolidate their background knowledge about a new area of learning. As students work out the branches, the teacher can see the constructions of their students' mental associations. As clustering moves into writing, the resulting process provides teachers with an excellent way to help students focus and begin to explore the material that the teacher wants to present.

Evaluating Writing-to-Learn

One of the benefits of writing-to-learn is also one of its problems. Students are used to being graded and sometimes have a tough time adjusting to the fact that something they write will not be graded. "Why work?" can be their honest response.

This natural reaction of students presents a practical dilemma for teachers. As teachers increase their use of personal response-type writing in their classrooms, they often must take steps to make students feel accountable for what they write. If teachers do not do this, some students just won't work. At least, they won't work until they find out how much fun writing can be.

Teachers can try to help students become more accountable by allowing in-class time for quickie free-writes. They can also give students set time limits -- five to seven minutes is usually lots of time -- and insist that there be NO talking during that time. In true spontaneous writing, teachers should insist that students write without stopping, without even taking their pencils off the page. If students run out of ideas they simply write "I don't know what to write" or they write their last word or phrase again and again until the juices start flowing again.

Teachers should not grade all of their students work, or even read it all. There just isn't time. Peers should read their partners' work as much as possible. Teachers can also ask some students to share their work with the class, finding some interesting work themselves and displaying them on the overhead. Often these displays prompt the "cooler" students to get involved so they too can get into the spotlight.

Sometimes classes absolutely must know that their work "counts for something." If this is the case, teachers can have their students keep all their spontaneous writing in a separate section or notebook and turn it all in periodically. At this time, teachers can flip through the work, comment on the interesting bits, and assign a holistic grade. In the case of free writings that

actually are letters to the teacher (containing students' questions, areas of confusion, and other valuable information), the teacher should try to have a few students go through these and make a list for the class of all the questions. Then both the teacher and the students can proceed to find the answers and fill in these "gaps" of knowledge.

Conclusion

The goal of the paper has been to help social studies teachers incorporate the use of writing assignments into a senior high social studies program. Teachers who teach their students to write also help their students learn and remember more about social studies. By writing, students become better language learners and better social studies learners at the same time.

Students will not simply absorb new concepts by listening to someone explain them. Instead, one of the best ways for students to improve social studies is for them to improve their language. To do this, students must internalize social studies concepts and skills by learning to use their own communication processes -- (1) reading, (2) writing, (3) speaking, (4) listening, and (5) viewing. Hopefully, this paper has presented a variety of activity ideas that will help teachers focus on using these five communication processes.